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ABSTRACT

A discussion of the use of word processing for the instruction of English as a Second Language (ESL) is presented in two parts. The first addresses the uses of the technology in teaching language skills, including writing, vocabulary, grammatical competence, reading skills, and oral skills. Related literature is reviewed and specific examples of classroom techniques are presented. The second part reports on a survey of teacher attitudes concerning the use of word processors. Results suggest that most teachers believe the word processor plays only a minor role in the development of writing skills and are not clear about what that role is, beyond its motivational effect. It is concluded that the most widely acceptable forms of word processor use in ESL are those that involve a central role for the teacher as a developer of instructional materials, guide, resource manager, and information and feedback source, and for the student as initiator, experimenter, and collaborator, the roles normally filled by teacher and student in a communicative classroom. This suggests that exploitation of the word processor provides good opportunities for integration of the technology and current language teaching practices. (MSE)

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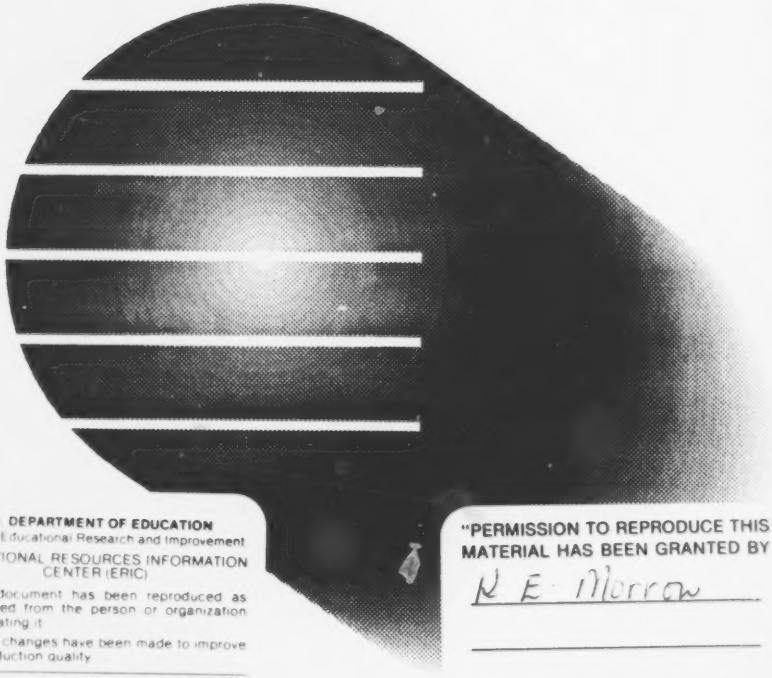
Academic Reports

The Use of the Word-Processor in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language to Adults



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Foreword

Ten years ago computers were unknown in EFL teaching in this country. Nowadays they are installed in many schools and CALL seems an established area of professional interest - as witness perhaps the existence of an IATEFL Special Interest Group. Nonetheless the status of CALL remains ambiguous.

On the one hand there are devotees, both teachers and students, whose imagination is fired by the medium and who spend uncounted hours working out how to get the very best from the equipment; at the other extreme are the 'anti-technocrats' whose view of teaching and learning as a person-centred activity means that they are profoundly inimical to the idea of handing it over to machines. In the middle, of course, are those teachers who are interested in taking CALL on its merits, and in using it to the extent that it can make their work more effective. It is to this group, the silent majority perhaps, that Tony Hopwood's report will be most interesting.

The first and larger part of the report deals with the uses that can be made of word-processors in teaching the traditional 'four skills'. Reports from the literature are discussed in the light of practical insight and experience, and a number of specific examples of techniques are given.

The second part of the report gives feedback on a small-scale investigation into teacher attitudes to the uses of word-processors. This reveals the considerable extent of such use and the interesting scope for systematic awareness-raising of the methodological possibilities. One of the author's main pleas is that students should not just be left alone to get on with using computers. The same clearly applies to teachers.

Keith Morrow
Director (Education)

February 1989

SECTION 1

Introduction

Whatever our beliefs about language teaching, we need to be clear about what our attitude is to the major technological innovation of recent years.

(Brumfit 1985)

The 1980's have witnessed a quite remarkable growth in the use of computers in language teaching. The recently developed, relatively cheap microcomputer can now be found in a range of EFL institutions, from university departments to small private schools. The response from teachers has, however, been anything but universally enthusiastic.

... the prospect of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has worried teachers even more, since it unites all their anxieties – greater success, exploitation of arcane technologies, and, eventually, the replacement of the teacher herself.

(Skehan 1985)

There has been detailed and principled criticism of the software.

The widespread belief that we already have good educational software or, if not, that it is just around the corner, seems to me to be entirely unfounded. Even the software which at first glance seems quite impressive is sadly deficient when looked at closely.

(Self 1985:167)

In addition to these objections, and the genuine reservations teachers have about the implied methodology (Brumfit 1985), there is the problem of the wide diversity of machine available and the

accompanying difficulty of software incompatibility. The main educational microcomputer in the UK is the Acorn BBC series, but programs developed for these machines will not run on the IBM-type machines in common use in other European secondary schools or on the Apple computers employed in North American schools. At the time of writing, there are attempts to standardise machines based on MS-DOS, the operating system of IBM PC copies, but the professional and commercial vested interests are such that there is a long way to go before this is achieved. The difficulties caused by the proliferation of different kinds of software developed for different machines by different writers in different software houses are not only limited to machine incompatibility. There is the very real problem of software protocols - the instructions used and the keys pressed by the student to operate the program, for example, to enter answers, to move on to the next phase or to repeat an exercise. Although there has been some attempt by software houses, most notably Wida Software, to standardise these protocols, they remain a genuine source of annoyance and frustration for students and a major disincentive for teachers to use certain programs. There is a considerable resistance to having to teach students a fresh range of skills every time a new program is introduced, made all the more understandable by the consideration that these skills only relate to ELT software and are of no possible use to those students outside the narrow confines of CALL.

A recently developed way of circumventing both of these problems is the use of applications software. Applications software is a generic term which covers programs written for use outside the field of education, such as data-base management systems, concordancers, teletext emulators, spreadsheets, desktop publishing packages and, most significantly, word-processors. Different versions of these programs are available for most microcomputers and the result of their adoption for language teaching has been the development of a range of technique, exercise and activity which is 'portable' from one system to another. Because of the obvious role for the word-processor in composition and writing, because the

skills the students are required to learn are useful in the real world and because it is probably the easiest practical use of the microcomputer for teachers to relate to on a personal level, it is this application which has so far generated the most interest, of both the theoretical and the practical kind. It is this area of development that this report sets out to investigate.

Methodology and Categorisation

> *While there has been increasing interest in the use of computers in language teaching, little attempt has yet been made to see how the computer can fit in with commonly-used models of language teaching and of language processing.*
>
> (Cook 1985)

Cook's general comment has a special relevance to a recently established sub-development of CALL like the use of applications software. This lack of a generally accepted methodological framework makes the task of categorising the various modes of use of the word-processor rather problematic. In this report, I propose to use the familiar skills-based division and consider both writings and practical examples under the following headings:

1. The use of the word-processor in the teaching/development of writing skills
2. The use of the word-processor in the teaching/development of writing subskills, lexis and grammatical competence
3. The use of the word-processor in the teaching/development of reading skills
4. The use of the word-processor in the teaching/development of oral-interactive skills.

It is hoped that in this way a practical focus can be maintained.

1. The use of word-processing in the teaching/development of writing skills

This section describes the use of word-processing in the production of written texts. The first necessity is to produce an hierarchy of levels of use of word-processors in writing. In order to do this, it is necessary to define exactly what is meant by 'writing' in the context of CALL. Researchers, writers and practitioners are far from consistent in their use of the term. In the interests of simplicity, therefore, I shall use 'writing' to mean the process of producing examples of text-types appropriate to the level of the student. I shall not in this section attempt to define any component subskills.

There is the further problem of deciding the basis for the establishment of levels of use. As the actual and potential use of the software is central to the discussion, I propose to consider three levels of approach:

Level 1: This involves minimal use of the features and parameters of the word-processor

Level 2: This involves the use of the word-processor as a sophisticated device for the editing and revision of text

Level 3: This involves the use of the full range of features available in most industry-standard word-processing packages. These include a thesaurus, a spell-checker and the capacity to control complicated procedures through macro applications.

Level 1

At the simplest possible level, word-processors are used by students as advanced electronic typewriters to produce written work which looks orderly and is easily readable. This use is entirely concerned with presentation, and the drafting and redrafting process is often done in advance using pen and paper. The literature abounds in enthusiastic statements about the motivating effect of using word-processing in this way –

> *The students and the teachers also appreciate the attractive finished products, the reprinted homework assignments. Smiles invariably come across the students' faces the first time they see their own words being printed out. They are proud to have produced such a thing and they are eager to write more and more.*
>
> (Mulhausen 1987: 6)

> *With the computer as a writing instrument, ... students ... can gain the immediate and personal satisfaction of seeing their work as they would like it to be presented.*
>
> (Adams 1983: 21)

– but positive affective feedback alone scarcely justifies the use of the expensive hardware and software.

There is also a certain amount of anecdotal evidence to suggest that some students, especially those from non-Roman alphabet language backgrounds, are more motivated to produce written work, as their semi-legible handwriting and the results of their frequent multiple corrections are no longer a source of embarrassment to them.

> *Another advantage is that students whose writing systems differ significantly from that of English are not artificially held back. Handwriting and language development can be split apart and each tackled separately.*
>
> (Maule 1988:3)

As far as the necessary keyboard skills are concerned, Johnson (1987) suggests that 'the basics of touch-typing can be taught in six to eight hours of 'moderately-concentrated work'. Barlow (1987) proposes a rather more comprehensive list of skills which he regards as essential for every 'computer novice' to master.

1. Using the keyboard
2. Giving commands to the computer
3. Calling up or loading the editor [word-processor] and a file
4. Entering text
5. Saving text
6. Modifying text, which involves
   a) moving the cursor and scrolling the screen
   b) inserting, deleting, or moving text
7. Saving a file and leaving the editor
8. Printing a file

He also highlights a little-considered problem, screen orientation. Novices tend to read screens from top to bottom and from right to left, whereas experienced users:

> *take in the pattern of the screen as a whole and focus very quickly on the part of the screen which contains the crucial information.*
>
> (op. cit.)

Higgins (see opposite) also comments on this problem. Barlow suggests that students should be taught strategies to identify these so-called hot-spots, but does not attempt to describe these strategies or to suggest guidelines for the way in which they might be taught.

Level 2

The next level of use is the exploitation of the editing features of the word-processor to facilitate the writing process by assisting in the drafting and redrafting of text. Errors of typography, spelling, syntax, appropriacy and style can be corrected by the students working on their own or with a teacher. For fairly obvious reasons, this is the use of the word-processor which appears to be the most popular with teachers and which correspondingly has the largest and most optimistic claims made for it.

> *A by-product of using word-processing is that students' writing became less stilted, less laboured, freer and more natural.*
>
> (Feldman 1984)

> *(Word-processors) ... make on-screen editing so easy that they encourage the user to try out the effect of changing or adding words, changing the order of sentences or even paragraphs, and playing around with the effect of different layouts. As a result, they seem to be affecting the quality as well as the quantity of what is being written on them.*
>
> Higgins and Johns 1984)

> *The computer is the perfect tool for a process approach to writing, because it makes revising and recopying texts physically easy. The computer can also help writers use various strategies for gathering information, organising it, and translating it into sentences, paragraphs and extended texts.*
>
> (Dauite 1985)

Of the research projects concerned with this level of use and focussing on the evaluation of the effects of using a computer in writing and revising, Bean (1983), Keifer and Smith (1983) and Levin et al (1983) all report favourable reactions from subjects. Others, however, are more circumspect in their conclusions.

> *... the findings offer little evidence that a computer or pen or typewriter had different effects on the quality of writing. For these able students, the writing tool was apparently not the variable that influenced the success of their essays ... Although word-processing may lead students to approach the task of writing and revising with enthusiasm, a boon in itself for writing teachers, the computer is not a panacea. We must be wary then of extravagant claims.*
>
> (Howisher 1987:158)

De Quincy (1986), reporting on a small-scale research project on the use of word-processing with EFL students of Cambridge FCE level, echoes these sentiments.

> *In Britain, although little funding was invested in pedagogic research, small groups of people (mainly teachers) were asking important questions about the efficacy and potential of word-processing, and a number of small informal evaluation projects came into existence. The major problem, because of the informality and lack of official funding for such projects, was that conclusions and claims were often subjective and anecdotal and resulted more from the neophytic enthusiasm of the personnel than from observable evidence. While many of these claims may have been well-founded, many of them were equally misleading, depicting the word-processor as the champion of the less able writer and endowing it with almost mystical qualities.*
>
> (de Quincy 1986)

The British Council Madrid project that de Quincy describes set out to determine whether or not the following were influenced by the use of a word-processor:

i. the length of written texts
ii. the quality of writing
iii. the way in which students write
iv. student motivation

The parameters of the research are too complex to be described here, but in brief the project was based on the comparison of handwritten and word-processed texts produced by, in some cases the same and in some cases different, students. In the context of this discussion, and bearing in mind the generally uncritical stance and tone of muchof the literature, it is perhaps worth giving a little space to the conclusions.

(i) the length of written texts

De Quincy found that there was no evidence to suggest that students write more when using a word-processor than they do when using a pen. This was stated simply as an observation and it was not claimed that longer texts are in themselves any more valuable or desirable than shorter ones.

(ii) the quality of written texts

The texts were marked by the FCE Chief Examiner for the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate. The results were inconclusive, and no evidence was found which might support the kind of claim quoted earlier.

(iii) the writing process

In describing the conclusions here, de Quincy makes the useful distinction between *editing* – 'the process of amending text during the first draft'– and *revision* – 'the process of editing either globally or locally after the first draft has been completed.' It was found that much more editing took place in word-processed texts. As far as the *way* both editing and revising was carried out, there was very little difference in the strategies employed to produce the word-processed and the handwritten texts.

> *While the number of 'amendments' (those alterations in the editing and revision processes) might be higher for those students who have an already well-established habit of editing and revision, there is no indication that those who do not edit or revise freely do any more so (sic) when using a wordprocessor.*
>
> (op. cit.)

(iv) student motivation

The post-project questionnaire revealed that all the students had enjoyed using a word-processor, and most felt that they did more editing and revising. The cautionary note sounded here concerned the often-observed fact that a lot of this enthusiasm can be explained by an excitement generated by the novelty of the technology.

While the majority of writers about this level of use are optimistic, and range in tone from the merely enthusiastic to the positively messianic, those whose views are based on actual research, rather than personal insight or anecdotal evidence, tend towards the view expressed by Howisher above.

Level 3

The next level involves the use of the more advanced features of word-processors, like search and replace text facilities, spelling checkers, thesauri, and grammar and style checkers. This level of use is much further developed in the USA than it is in the UK and the rest of Europe, largely because the programs involved require large amounts of memory. Most secondary and tertiary level institutions in the USA use MSDOS-based micros, Apple machines, or even, in some cases, mainframes, all of which have the necessary memory capacity to run these applications. The Acorn BBC machines in use in a large number of EFL institutions in the UK do not. It follows, therefore, that most of the literature concerned with this level of use is confined to high-school and graduate writing programmes in the

USA, although there are a limited number of articles covering ESL and EFL teaching. Huffman and Goldberg (1987) describe the use of advanced word-processing features in teaching EFL composition.

> *To improve their work generally, they can search for occurrences of 'there' to determine whether they are used in expletives. They can also search for 'he, his, him' and 'she, her' to locate sexist language. Likewise, they can find and replace abstract nouns by searching for the endings '-ance, -ence, -ty, and -ness'.*
>
> (op. cit.:174)

After the students have revised their work in this way, they run their drafts through a spelling checker. There are the familiar problems.

> *Since homonyms such as 'their' and 'there' are both found in its dictionaries, the students cannot blindly and automatically assume that if the checker finds all the words in their drafts in its dictionaries that all the words are spelled correctly.*
>
> (op. cit.:174)

There is no account given of the procedure that the students should follow in this eventuality.

This brief example highlights a very common problem in the use for EFL teaching of applications software designed for native-speakers in the 'real world'. As far as the student is concerned, the teacher has asked that the draft be run through a spelling checker to check spelling. His assumption is that the machine should fulfil the function of either a dictionary or a teacher. Clearly, it cannot provide the semantic function of a dictionary or perform the explanatory role of the teacher. The least that the student can expect, therefore, is that it should check and correct all spelling errors. The fact that it cannot do this does not automatically invalidate this use of word-processors; it merely argues strongly for more support for the student and more involvement by the teacher in the whole process. It is interesting to note that in this particular case, and one

suspects that it is not atypical, the student is required, after completing the spelling checker stage of the process, to 'mail (the text) to the instructor for grading' (op. cit.:174). There is no indication that the teacher provides help or remedial feedback on the students' work.

It is fairly obvious that the advanced facilities of word-processors are designed to relieve the drudgery of routine checking, not to assist in the acquiring of skills and knowledge, and the overall development of language competence. Indeed, it could be argued that by providing answers in this routined fashion, the use of a feature like the spelling checker as described above actually hinders the learning process. The use of this facility need not involve the student in any conscious decisions about the correctness or otherwise of a particular word. Indeed, as it is commonly accepted that a significant amount of incidental learning takes place when dictionaries are used on a regular basis, the use of this electronic substitute could be seen a retrograde step and one that has contributed to the impoverishment of the students' learning environment.

Papert (1980) and Jones and Fortescue (1987) both recognise the formal limitations of word-processing in the development of writing skills. They argue that the contribution of the technology is not that it is a means of changing students' writing habits, but rather that it can focus the attention of both the learner and the teacher on the writing process itself, and in this way act as a catalyst for changes in attitude. De Quincy echoes this opinion in his summing up of the conclusions of the Madrid research project discussed above.

> *The word-processor is an extremely powerful writing tool which will undoubtedly influence the way students write and organize their texts. It is my contention, however, that this will not happen automatically when students sit down at a keyboard and start typing their assignments. Nor will it happen when students are merely shown, as they were in this project, how to use the various editing and re-organizing facilities resident in all word-processors. It will*

happen when teachers accept that the word-processor offers them the best opportunity they have ever been given to concentrate their own minds and those of their students on the writing process itself, and when students, in close consultation with their teachers, work on adapting their writing habits to take best advantage of the facilities of the word-processor.

(op. cit.)

2. The use of word-processing in the teaching/development of writing subskills, lexis and grammatical competence

This section attempts to describe a number of activities involving the word-processor which appear to be in common use in EFL, and which cannot be neatly pigeon-holed using the skills-based divisions already decided on. It is for example quite possible that the 'lexis' or 'grammatical competence' aim of some of the writing activities would eventually improve spoken performance, especially at the lower levels. As far as sophistication of use of the word-processor is concerned, all of these activities fit into Level 2 in the system detailed above.

There is only a very small body of literature on this category of use (Schmid 1987, Jones and Fortesque, Maule 1988), and the following examples are drawn from the classroom. They are in two forms, lesson plans for teachers for classroom work, and self-access electronic 'worksheets' for students taken off a computer network. As can be seen from the format of the latter, the principle is that the student saves her attempt and this is corrected by the teacher and re-saved for the student to look at in her own time. Clearly, depending on the level and form of correction employed by the teacher, this process can be repeated several times with the same exercise.

The lesson plans are based on the following principles, taken from Eastment and Hopwood (in preparation):

1. Writing on a screen is common property in a way in which that produced during pen-and-paper group writing exercises is not. Everyone can read it easily and no one student owns it or is responsible for it. This encourages the sort of risk-taking and experimentation which is often painfully lacking in pen-and-paper exercises.

2. The most disorganised and messy draft appears encouragingly 'neat' on the screen. This is especially important in some of the more advanced exercises.

3. The original text is always available on disk, so if a group gets into serious trouble and feels their work is irredeemable, they can always start again from scratch with a minimum of effort. Any teacher who has been asked for a fresh copy of an exercise handout when an exact number has been brought into the classroom will recognise the importance of this point.

4. It is very easy for the teacher to indicate errors by inserting pointers ('Sp' for spelling, 'T' for tense, etc.) into the text. These are then deleted by the students when they correct the errors. Marking thus becomes an interim stage and not a final judgement, and the students' attitude to error should change accordingly.

5. The students' texts can be stored on disk for exploitation in subsequent lessons, or for self-study work.

Spelling

****
FILE NAME 'Spell3' (in Directory GROUP.TEXTS)
****

STUDENT'S NAME .....

Spelling 3

In the following story, there are a number of spelling mistakes. Can you find them and correct them all?

When you finish, SAVE your work.

Whenever I'm not smilling people allways ask me whether I'm feelling depressed or just a miserable sort of person. It's an awfull nuisance because no one can walk around grining on every occassion and I don't believe that basicly other people are any hapier than me. Although I try to practise smilling in front off the mirror it doesn't seem to have any effect. My friends and acquaintances say, 'Come on, cheer up. It's not that bad!'

****

The purpose of this exercise is clearly to practise spelling patterns. As it is designed for self-access, the assumption is that the student either knows the rules for the doubling of consonents or has access to that information. The acceptibility of this type of error correction activity, whether word-processor or paper and pencil based, depends very much on whether the individual teacher subscribes to the idea that the correction of errors not made by the individual learner can be of use in the learning process.

Note the importance of giving the filename and directory path for the exercise. If these exercises are stored in hard-copy form, it is essential to know where to find them on floppy disk or, in this case, on the network hard disk.

Punctuation

****

FILE NAME : 'Punc1' (in Directory GROUP:TEXTS)

****

STUDENT'S NAME .....

Punctuation

Put in the correct punctuation (and capital letters) in the following text.

To make capital letters, put the cursor under the letter you want to change and press CTRL and 'S'.

When you finish, SAVE your work.

dear mr brown

i'm writing to you to let you know that i'll be away from school until next monday i'm sorry i couldn't let you know in person but your secretary told me you were busy and i didn't want to disturb you the reason for my absence is that my uncle from the united states is paying us an expected visit and as i am the only one in the family who speaks english i'm going to look after him if i had known sooner i would have told you but as i said the visit is unexpected

yours sincerely maria garcia

When you finish, SAVE your work.

****

****

FILE NAME : 'Caps1' (in Directory GROUP:TEXTS)

****

STUDENT'S NAME .....

Capital Letters 1

The following sentences do not have any capital letters.

To make capital letters, put the cursor under the letter you want to change and press CTRL and 'S'.

When you finish, SAVE your work.

i'll see you on friday or at the weekend mr. jones
if we don't meet in the summer, let's meet in september or at christmas
this is uncle ted who is in the royal air force
i saw a programme about the sun and the moon on t.v. last night.
most scottish people prefer to call themselves scots - unlike the whisky which is always called scotch. the h.q. of the metropolitan police is called scotland yard, which is in london.

When you finish, SAVE your work.

****

These two examples underline the importance of rubrics. Both exercises remind the learner twice to save his/her work, and also include brief instructions on how to operate the software. The second exercise would certainly be improved by some form of contextualisation.

Lexis, Syntax and Textual Cohesion

****
FILE NAME : 'Gap2' (in Directory GROUP:TEXTS)
****

STUDENT'S NAME .....

In the following passage one word has been omitted from each line. Insert the correct word in the right place in each line. As you insert words, the text will move and change lines. It is important, therefore, to read the whole passage first.

You should fly with a severe cold in the head. If you are unable relieve changes in pressure caused by a climb or descent, you may seriously damage your ears. Apart having slower reactions and feeling ill, there is a real risk bursting an eardrum or developing a very painful inner ear infection. If have a cold but feel well, you must not fly you are able to clear your ears. You climb, you feel the change in atmospheric pressure in ears.

****

There is nothing original about this exercise, which is simply a more difficult variation on gap-filling procedure. Standardising the line length could turn it into the kind of gapless Cloze passage found in the TOEFL. The advantage of using the word-processor lies in the ease of amendment of the text for the student, and of reading and marking for the teacher.

****
FILE NAME : 'Gap3' (in Directory GROUP:TEXTS)
****

STUDENT'S NAME .....

Here is a text which is not very interesting and in places not correct because there are no adjectives in it.

Choose any adjectives you like in order to give some life to the story.

Once upon a time there was a boy who lived in a house in a town. He wasn't very. One day it was very. He felt rather and so he decided to go for a walk in the forest. Soon the weather became and he felt quite. He was very when he suddenly heard a noise and turned round to see a girl from his school. She was very and had eyes and hair.

When you have finished SAVE your work

****

This example again exploits the editing function, and encourages the student to experiment within limits. The justification for using the word-processor is presumably the 'motivating orderliness of all drafts' argument.

The following three examples are lesson plans for teachers, taken from teacher development courses for native and non-native speakers at Bell College Saffron Walden.

Contradictions

AIM OF LESSON: To revise/recycle vocabulary
To make students aware of textual coherence

LEVEL: Elementary to Advanced

MATERIALS: A short text containing several internal contradictions (see example)

TIME: 15 - 45 minutes

ASSUMPTIONS: Students know how to operate the DELETE function.

PREPARATION: Type in the text.

> e.g. 'I hate going abroad so I never leave England and I never go on holiday. Last year I went skiing in Austria. I had a lovely time. The weather was lovely, the sea was warm and the beach wasn't at all crowded. I couldn't find anywhere to sit ....'

WHAT TO DO: The students have to delete parts of the text so that what remains makes sense grammatically and syntactically.

VARIATIONS: At Elementary level, the problem can consist merely of contradictory adjectives. At higher levels, the contradictions can be contained in the syntax of a sentence or in the conflicting meanings of two sentences.

COMMENTS: The easiest way to prepare this exercise is to take an existing text and adapt it, rather than trying to create a piece from scratch.

Tautologies

AIM OF LESSON: To revise/recyle vocabulary
To make students aware of textual coherence

LEVEL: Elementary to Advanced

MATERIALS: A short text containing a number of tautological errors.

TIME: 15 - 45 minutes

ASSUMPTIONS: Students can operate the DELETE function.

PREPARATION: Type in the text.

WHAT TO DO: The students have to reduce the text to the shortest possible length by deleting all the tautological features.

VARIATIONS: With Elementary students, the tautological features of the text can consist of repetitions of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs of similar meaning, e.g.

The large big dog walked on its legs over the white snow.

With Intermediate and Advanced students, the tautology can be more semantic, e.g.

Everyone had left the party. The room was empty. There was no-one there.

COMMENTS: As with the previous activity, it is normally better to 'doctor' an existing text that to try to create a new one.

Agreement

AIM OF LESSON: To practise agreement between personal pronouns and possessive adjectives, and between subject and verb.

LEVEL: Elementary

MATERIALS: an elementary text, containing simple personal information, e.g.

Hullo! My name's Jenny. I'm a schoolgirl and I live in a small town in the north of England. My house is quite close to my school. School is from 9 to 3.30. I take all sorts of subjects, but I don't enjoy all of them. My favourites are English and Geography. I really don't like Maths! My hobbies are dancing, playing the piano and sailing.

TIME: 30 - 45 minutes

ASSUMPTIONS: Students can operate the DELETE and INSERT TEXT functions.

PREPARATION: Type in the text. Now, using the SEARCH AND REPLACE facility, replace all the incidences of 'I' with 'she', so that the text looks like this:

> Hullo! My name's Jenny. she'm a schoolgirl and she live in a small town in the north of England. My house is quite close to my school. School is from 9 to 3.30. she take all sorts of subjects, but she don't enjoy all of them. My favourites are English and Geography. she really don't like Maths! My hobbies are dancing, playing the piano and sailing.

WHAT TO DO: The students have to change the possessive adjectives and verbs so that they agree with third person pronoun.

VARIATIONS: A pronoun can be changed instead of a possessive adjective.

COMMENTS: If texts are in the present tense, this can be a useful way of focussing students' attention on the third person 's'. In order to reinforce the learning aspect of the activity, a parallel text containing the correct language items could be loaded under the 'corrupted' text. The learners would then have correct language data from which to make inferences.

A version of this activity is described by Higgins (1988:71) and Jones and Fortesque (1987:51-52). The sample text is given for illustration only. Clearly, the most useful texts are those which are drawn from the students' coursework.

Many of the ideas behind the exercises and activities described in this section are widely accepted and, as has been stated above, already exist in other forms in other media. The conclusion is not that the word-processor is being used in a new or revolutionary way, but that it is being employed as enabling technology, to enhance and improve an already existing methodology. The ease of materials creation for the word processor brings its own problems. The possession of word-processing software does not turn a good classroom teacher into a materials writer any more than the purchase of a Desktop Publishing package turns a writer into a designer.

3. The use of word-processing in the teaching/development of reading skills

While there has been considerable interest in recent years in the use of computer programs to teach reading at primary level (High and Fox 1984), secondary level (Wallace 1985) and in the field of teaching EFL to adults (Nyns 1988), the use of the word-processor in this area is a relatively unexplored phenomenon.

Common sense suggests that the computer with its limited screen display is a far from ideal medium for the development of extensive reading skills. Higgins (1988) deals with this topic at some length.

> *Since the computer's natural role is that of pedagogue, and since the reading book is, or should be in a pedagogue relationship to the learner, it might seem to follow that the computer can be used as a delivery system for reading matter and will thus help develop a reading skill. In practice this turns out to be a fallacy for two reasons. Firstly there is no need to use a computer screen to do a job which is already done very well and much more cheaply with paper and ink. Secondly it is gradually becoming clear that reading from a screen is a very different activity from reading from the printed page.*
>
> (op. cit.: 65)

There have been attempts to develop programs to increase reading speed through the development of predictive skills (Nyns 1988, Rope 1985), but such programs have based around the sort of question and cueing techniques which are generally associated with intensive reading skills practice.

> *It is also necessary to grasp the complex relations between sentences which make up a text. Hasan and Halliday (1986) have shown how the correct interpretation of pronouns, articles, and conjunctions is*

paramount to the understanding of discourse. Although this is rarely a source of difficulty for L1 readers, it appears that L2 readers often fail to interpret reference items or logical connectives correctly. Hence the need for specific practice.

(Nyns, op. cit.)

There is also the question of authenticity of text presentation. Clearly, as soon as text is produced on a computer screen, either as the screen display of a reading skills program or as word-processed text, the sort of contextual assistance vital to comprehension disappears. Indeed, more recent approaches to using computers in the development of extensive reading skills have stressed the importance of providing the text in hard copy in the original form (Eastment and Hopwood, in preparation). The emphasis is on integrating the use of the computer with other media rather than employing it as a substitute.

The sort of micro-skills listed by Nyns above, however, are eminently suited to practice activities using a word-processor. The following examples show the sort of exercise that can be done. This kind of text manipulation activity is widely-used by teachers in its paper-based incarnation. The advantages of using a word-processor have been discussed above.

Reordering

AIM OF LESSON: To improve understanding of discourse markers and suprasentential textual devices.

LEVEL: Upper Elementary and above, depending on the relative difficulty of the material used.

MATERIALS: A piece of text at a level slightly higher than the students' productive competence. The length will depend on the level of the students.

TIME: 15 - 45 minutes

ASSUMPTIONS: Students are able to operate the MOVE TEXT facility on the word-processor.

PREPARATION: Type the text into the word-processor and, using the MOVE TEXT facility, change the order of the sentences. With longer and more complex texts, print out the scrambled version and make enough photocopies for the class.

WHAT TO DO: In groups, the students have to reorder the sentences and reconstruct the original text. Inter-group collaboration should be encouraged.

VARIATIONS: With Intermediate and Advanced level groups, longer texts can be used and paragraphs rather than sentences can be re-ordered. Another variation is to scramble the lines of a poem (for example, Philip Larkin's 'Going') and ask the students not to attempt to reproduce the original but instead to use some of the lines to create their own version. Naturally, they should make the necessary adjustments to ensure textual coherence and cohesion.

COMMENTS: With longer and more complex texts, it is very important that students don't spend all their time staring at the screen. The lesson should begin away from the machines, with the students working on and discussing the printed versions of the text, and only approaching the keyboard when they have decided on a course of action.

Two-in-one stories

AIM OF LESSON: To improve students' understanding of sequencing and linking devices in narratives

LEVEL: Lower Intermediate and above

MATERIALS: Two short narrative texts consisting of about eight sentences each

TIME: 15 - 60 minutes

ASSUMPTIONS: Students are able to operate the MOVE TEXT and the DELETE TEXT facility

PREPARATION: Using the word-processor, construct a text which consists of the sentences from the two stories scrambled and then mixed together.

WHAT TO DO: The students have first to identify which sentences belong to which story. Having done that, they delete the sentences belonging to one story (the choice is theirs) and then, using the MOVE TEXT facility, re-order the remaining sentences to recreate the second story.

VARIATIONS: Instead of deleting one of the stories, the students first separate the two sets of sentences, and then recreate both stories. Clearly, this is a more demanding and time-consuming activity, and should only be tried when the students have come to grips with the first version of the exercise.

COMMENTS: Again, there is nothing revolutionary about the idea, which has been used in language classrooms for years. The main advantages of using the word-processor are the speed of preparation, the relative inviolablity of the material (the paper and

scissors version is notorious for lost bits of text), and the ordered appearance of the text on the screen, even in the middle of the activity. This idea was originally published in 'Challenge to Think' by Frank, Rinvolucri and Berer (1982) OUP.

The two major questions to ask here are firstly whether these exercises can be said to develop reading skills, and secondly whether the use of the word-processor is in fact necessary. It is clear that this sort of intensive work on discourse structure can only make a small contribution to the overall development of reading skills and that these activities should form only part of an overall reading programme involving other forms of intensive reading as well as extensive reading practice. I feel that the organisational advantages of the word-processor outlined above fully justify its use in this context.

4. The use of the word-processor in the teaching/development of oral skills

Unsurprisingly, as it isa technological development designed to facilitate writing, the word-processor has so far had little impact on the teaching and learning of oral skills. Claims, however, have been made for it, and these should be examined.

A charge often levelled at CALL software is that the majority of programs are based on the drill-and-practice methodology prevalent in the 1960's.

> *Until quite recently enormously sophisticated computers have been harnessed to the presentation of relatively trivial question-and-answer type drills.*
>
> (Phillips 1985:103)

One of the articles of faith of the CALL movement in the early 1980's was the contention that the interaction generated around the screen by a whole variety of program types was beneficial to the language acquisition process and helped to justify the proposition that CALL had a central role to play in communicative language teaching.

> *There is usually even richer use of language in move-based simulations ... The users have time to discuss possible moves and compare one with another, and there is a real need for 'must' and 'may', and for 'if' clauses.*
>
> (Higgins and Johns 1984:64)

As can be seen from the lesson plans described above, and from the survey described later, this view is extremely popular amongst teachers. The sort of group writing and collaborative exercises and

activities designed to develop reading and writing skills using a word-processor should generate this kind of communicative interaction. Piper (1986) found, however, that the language generated around a screen and keyboard was more impoverished that produced by students engaged in the identical activity without the assistance of the computer. In a later study (Piper 1987), although still cautious about the quality of the language, she comments favourably on the quantity.

> *... the use of the word-processor in writing classes seems to increase the likelihood that students will seek and be more responsive to advice ... they not only think about their writing, but they talk about it a lot as well.*
>
> (op. cit.)

SECTION 2

A survey of teacher attitudes towards the use of word-processing

> *The more opportunities that learners have to exploit the word-processor facilities of the micro-computer to produce a variety of textual forms, e..g., essays, poems, newspaper front pages (perhaps with the help of desk-top publishing), letters and entries for subject-specific databases, the more naturally they will handle the target language, first discussing their on screen input before arriving at a perfect final draft, and the more meaningfully they will employ it.*
>
> (Brown 1987)

In order to place the findings of the survey of the literature on word-processing in some kind of practical context, I conducted a small-scale study of teacher attitude and approach in two of the Bell schools. Both have had a network of BBC microcomputers for at least four years and there are in both institutions machines set aside for teachers' use. The students' machines are grouped together in computer rooms, which are bookable by teachers on a lesson-by-lesson basis.

The study took the form of a questionnaire administered to all teachers and an interview with five individuals selected at random. The purpose of the questionnaire was:

(a) to try to determine the general pattern of use of the word-processing facility in the schools

(b) to try to find out which of the uses discussed above were the most widespread

(c) to try to find out what kind of activities and exercises teachers felt to be the most successful

(d) to try to identify the most common problems experienced when using word-processor with students.

Results

21 questionnaires were returned out of a total of 45, giving a return of 46.6%. Of these, 29% said that they did not use word-processing at all with students, although 10% said that they used it for their own writing and for materials preparation, and a further 10% hoped to start the following term. Of those who used word-processors, 86% used them for their own personal work, for materials preparation and with students, 11% for their personal work and materials preparation, and 6% just with students. 24% had had experience with both BBC OS and MSDOS based word-processing packages. Unsurprisingly, these questionnaires yielded the most information about classroom use.

(a) the pattern of use

47% of the respondents used word-processing at least once a week, 33% once every two or three weeks and 20% 'occasionally'. The greatest frequency of use was at the beginning of term, because of the necessity of orienting the students to the facilities.

(b) the kind of use

56% indicated that most of the work that was done on the word-processor was at writing at Level 1, i.e., almost entirely concerned with quality of presentation. None of the respondents indicated that there was any significant use of the word-processor in the teaching and development of the writing process (Level 2), although 20% said that it was used for exercises to teach sub-skills like punctuation, and 20% employed it for error correction. Pair and group writing was mentioned by 56%, but language awareness and text manipulation by only 6%.

(c) useful activities and exercises

40% felt that any activity involving pair or groupwork had been the most successful. 7% mentioned 'creative' writing and 7% 'authentic'

writing in this context. One respondent felt that everything she had tried had been useful and successful.

(d) student problems

The majority, 60%, felt that failure to save text correctly was the most usual problem encountered by students. 27% said that poor or non-existent typing skills were the cause of most difficulty and 20% said that it was the operation of the word-processor itself which was the major problem.

Interviews

The second part of the study was a series of interviews with five of the respondents in order to obtain more detailed opinions and views. The interview was based on the following four questions:

1. Why do you use a word-processor?
2. Do you think writing with a word-processor is different to writing with a pen? If so, in what way?
3. Do you have any evidence, anecdotal or otherwise, to support that point of view?
4. Do you think the use of word-processing in EFL is a significant methodological development or do you see the word-processor as a useful additional aid? Please give reasons for your answer.

The results have been included in the conclusions overleaf.

Conclusions

1. The case for regarding the use of word-processing as either a radical departure or a major development in the teaching and development of writing skills seems, on the evidence described above, to remain largely unproven. De Quincy's findings in his recent (1987) study using EFL learners:

> *illustrate the possible dangers of the unquestioning acceptance and use of wordprocessors as a teaching resource*

appear to support those of Howisher in her study of native speakers quoted above. Piper (1987) is rather more optimistic about certain facets of her study:

> *It was interesting but perhaps not surprising that those (students) who expressed positive views about word processing were also those who appeared most at home in a class where they were encouraged to interact with other students as part of the learning programme.*

and there is certainly scope for further research into this insight, but her comments on the relationship between the word-processor and the writing process are more hopeful than incisive:

> *... it might seem that coming to perceive oneself as a writer in a foreign language is an impossible ideal. However, ... through its capacity to engage learners ... more closely in the act of writing, and by motivating them to write more, and better, the word processor might bring that ideal closer to reality.*

The evidence gathered from the teachers survey suggests that most teachers believe that the word-processor has only a minor role to play in the development of writing skills and most are not really clear about what exactly that role is, beyond the obvious point about the motivating effect of the tidy screen display.

2. The usefulness of the word-processor to teach or assist in the development of all the other skills mentioned above also appears to be undecided. A feature of the teachers survey was the emphasis that was placed upon the suitability of the word-processor for facilitating groupwork, although they were unclear as to what specific aims this achieved. Jones and Fortescue (1987) are equally vague on this subject.

> *because all group members can be usefully involved in the discussion, fruitful co-operation is much more likely to occur.*

The question of the value of interaction round the machine has already been dealt with, and while it is fair to say that further studies along the lines of Piper (1986) may produce more encouraging results, if the only 'fruit' yielded by the co-operation mentioned above is the text on the screen, rather than the development of competence and skills, then we are no further forward.

3. The final question concerns the emergence of a specific methodology developed around the use of the word-processor. Kemmis et al (1977), in a much-quoted (e.g. Higgins 1988) account of a study into the computer and the learner, identify four learning paradigms, instructional, revelatory, conjectural and emancipatory. Their definitions are summarised as follows:

> *Instructional*: the teacher makes statements and checks for recall, as in standard forms of instruction and programmed learning.
>
> *Revelatory*: the teacher provides structured experience and checks for assimilation of the targets
>
> *Conjectural*: the teacher sets tasks for students to solve, provides the necessary resources and facilities, and hopes that insights occur.
>
> *Emancipatory*: the teacher provides the learner with the tools to facilitate relevant learning activity and to reduce irrelevant activity.

The use of the word-processor as described earlier would appear to fit the specification of the conjectural paradigm. There is also an element of the revelatory, in that the teacher need not merely 'hope that insights occur' but can check whether they have or not. There is therefore an acceptable model of learning that applies to the various exercises and activities we have considered. All five of the teachers interviewed, however, were uncompromising in their rejection of the idea that the use of the word-processor in EFL teaching might constitute a significant methodological development.

The most general and perhaps firmest conclusion that can be reached here is that the most widely-acceptable forms of use of word-processing in TEFL, both in the classroom and for self-access, are those which involve a central role for the teacher as materials developer, guide, resources manager and information and feedback source, and for the student as initiator, experimenter and collaborator - the roles in other words that they would normally fulfil in a communicative classroom. The suggestion is, therefore, that of all the recent advances in CALL, the exploitation of the word-processor offers one of the best opportunities presently available for the integration of the latest computer technology with current teaching practices.

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• The first and larger section of this report deals with the uses that can be made of word-processors in teaching the traditional 'four skills'. Reports from the literature are discussed in the light of practical insight and experience, and a number of specific examples of techniques are given.

• The second section of the report gives feedback on a small-scale investigation into teacher attitudes to the uses of word-processors. This reveals the considerable extent of such use and the interesting scope for systematic awareness-raising of the methodological possibilities.

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